

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 EB-07 COME-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00
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P R 141343Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6098
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA

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GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR YOUNG

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDEV, RH, UK
SUBJECT: THE GUARDIAN ARTICLE

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE, ENTITLED "CABINET SHOOTS DOWN
RHODESIA PLAN", BY PETER JENKINS APPEARED IN THE JULY 14
EDITION OF THE GUARDIAN.

BEGIN TEXT: BRITISH MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN RHODESIA
HAS BEEN RULED OUT CATEGORICALLY BY THE CABINET. THE
ANGLO-AMERICAN PEACE MISSION IS STALLED AND THE "OWEN
PLAN" EFFECTIVELY DEAD.

WHEN THE FOREIGN SECRETARY LAID HIS PLAN BEFORE THE
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FULL CABINET LAST THURSDAY MORNING HE FOUND HIMSELF IN
A VICIOUS CROSSFIRE LED BY THE CHANCELLOR, MR. DENIS
HEALEY, FROM ONE FLANK AND THE ENERGY SECRETARY, MR.
TONY BENN, FROM THE OTHER.
MR. HEALEY, MR. BENN, AND A MAJORITY OF MINISTERS
BELIEVED THAT THE OWEN PLAN CONTAINED THE DANGEROUS SEED
OF A "BRITISH VIETNAM". THEY GAVE SHORT AND CONTEMPTUOUS

SHRIFT TO THE NOTION OF BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN SOME KIND OF JOINT FORCE WHOSE TASK IT WOULD BE TO HOLD THE RING WHILE ELECTIONS TOOK PLACE PENDING THE HAND-OVER OF SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE.

DR. OWEN'S CHIEF SUPPORT IN A LIVELY CABINET SESSION CAME FROM MR. MICHAEL FOOT. BOTH FACTIONS LATER CLAIMED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS REALLY ON THEIR SIDE. THEN ON FRIDAY, AT A SMALLER MEETING OF SENIOR MINISTERS AT WHICH MR. HEALEY AGAIN TOOK THE LEAD, THE BABY WENT OUT WITH THE BATHWATER. HAVING RULED OUT ANY FORM OF MILITARY INVOLVEMENT. MINISTERS RECOILED FROM THE PREVIOUSLY AGREED NOTION OF PROVIDING SOME FORM OF CIVIL ADMINISTRATION UNDER A RESIDENT COMMISSIONER DURING THE TRANSITION FROM WHITE TO MAJORITY RULE. DR. OWEN HAD GONE TO CABINET IN THE HOPE OF WINNING SUFFICIENT APPROVAL FOR HIS PLAN TO ENABLE HIM TO FLY OUT TO WASHINGTON IN PREPARATION FOR A PEACE-SEEKING SOUTHERN AFRICAN SHUTTLE LATER THIS MONTH. BUT HE FINISHED THE WEEK WITH LESS BACKING FROM HIS COLLEAGUES THAN WHEN LAUNCHING THE ANGLO-AMERICAN MISSION IN THE SPRING. MINISTERS HAD PREVIOUSLY MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO PUT TOGETHER A RING-HOLDING FORCE BY REFUSING TO PERMIT HIM TO RECRUIT CONTRIBUTIONS FROM COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES. BUT ON THURSDAY WHEN THE CABINET TOOK THE

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POSITION OF "NOT A SINGLE BRITISH TROOP" THE OWEN PLAN FELL APART.

MINISTERS FEARED THAT ELECTIONS IN RHODESIA MIGHT SOLVE NOTHING AND THAT BRITISH TROOPS COULD BE LEFT IN THE MIDDLE OF AN AFRICAN CIVIL WAR. THEIR RELUCTANCE TO SEE BRITAIN INVOLVED ON THE GROUND WAS REINFORCED BY AN EMPHATIC AMERICAN REFUSAL TO PLAY ANY MILITARY ROLE. THE AMERICANS WERE RELUCTANT TO PROVIDE EVEN LOGISTICAL SUPPORT.

DR. OWEN EXPLAINED TO HIS COLLEAGUES THAT INVOLVEMENT IN ANY FORM WAS WHOLLY CONDITIONAL ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF HIS CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS AND THE CESSATION OF THE ARMED CONFLICT. NEVERTHELESS HE RECEIVED VERY LITTLE SUPPORT. NOW HE IS OBLIGED TO REAPPRAISE HIS SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLICY. HE TOLD THE COMMONS YESTERDAY THAT HE WILL BE FLYING TO WASHINGTON ON SATURDAY WEEK. JULY 23. FOR TALKS WITH SECRETARY OF STATE, CYRUS VANCE. IN THE MEANTIME, THE ANGLO-AMERICAN MISSION LED BY MR. JOHN GRAHAM OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND MR. STEPHEN LOW, THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO ZAMBIA, IS IN ABEYANCE. ALL OF THIS REPRESENTS A TEMPORARY POLITICAL SET-BACK TO THE HIGH-FLYING DR. OWEN ALTHOUGH HE CAN IN

TRUTH AND FAIRNESS SAY THAT HE WAS NEVER STARRY-EYED
ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF ACHIEVING A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT
IN RHODESIA. IT WAS AND REMAINS HIS BELIEF THAT A
BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY CANNOT SIMPLY WRING HIS HANDS
AND DO NOTHING BEYOND DECLARING HOW TERRIBLE IT ALL IS.

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SO HE WILL PERSIST IN HIS PEACE-SEEKING DIPLOMACY.
THE IMPLICATION FOR BRITISH POLICY OF THE
CABINET'S DECISION IS SUPPORT FOR THE PATRIOTIC FRONT.
THIS WAS THE LINE FAVORED BY MR. HEALEY OF THE CHOICES
AVAILABLE TO THE CABINET. NOW THAT DR. OWEN'S HANDS ARE
TIED IT IS ALSO THE MOST LIKELY OF THE OPTIONS TO APPEAL
TO THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION.
THE OWEN PLAN HAD THREE COMPONENTS--EACH DEPENDENT
ON THE OTHER. THE FIRST WAS A CONSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENT,
IN ESSENCE ELECTIONS CONDUCTED ON THE BASIS OF ONE MAN,

ONE VOTE. THE SECOND WAS THE ARRANGEMENTS TO FOLLOW IN-
DEPENDENCE IN WHICH THE KEY FACTOR WAS THE ZIMBABWE
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DEVELOPMENT FUND. BUT THE MOST CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF THE
WHOLE PLAN WAS THE THIRD, THE MEANS OF GETTING FROM A
TO B--FROM WHITE RULE TO MAJORITY RULE. IT IS THE MEANS
TO THE END WHICH THE CABINET HAS REMOVED FROM THE
PACKAGE.

ALTHOUGH NO FIRM AND FORMAL UNDERSTANDINGS HAD BEEN
REACHED AS A RESULT OF THE GRAHAM-LOW DIPLOMACY IT WAS
BELIEVED WITH SOME CONFIDENCE THAT MR. IAN SMITH HAD AT
LONG LAST COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT ONE MAN, ONE VOTE MA-
JORITY RULE COULD NO LONGER BE AVOIDED. IT WAS ALSO
EXPECTED TO OVERCOME DIFFICULTIES CONCERNING THE
\$1,200 MILLIONS ZIMBABWE DEVELOPMENT FUND AND SUCH
PROBLEMS AS THE FUNDING OF WHITE RHODESIAN PENSION
RIGHTS. BUT THE PROBLEM OF MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER
DURING THE TRANSITION WAS THE SUBJECT OF SUCH FUNDA-
MENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SALISBURY AND THE PATRIOTIC
FRONT THAT IT WAS HARD FOR ANYBODY TO SEE HOW A SETTLE-
MENT COULD EVER BE AGREED OR IMPLEMENTED WITHOUT THE
ASSISTANCE OF SOME THIRD AND NEUTRAL ELEMENT.
THE PUBLIC POSITIONS OF THE SMITH GOVERNMENT AND THE
NKOMO-MUGABE-LED PATRIOTIC FRONT WERE DIAMETRICALLY OP-
POSED. MR. SMITH INSISTS THAT HIS SECURITY FORCES RE-
MAIN UNDER WHITE CONTROL WHILE FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS
ARE CONDUCTED. MEANWHILE THE GUERRILLAS OF THE
PATRIOTIC FRONT MUST LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS. THE LEADERS
OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, FOR THEIR PART, WERE INSISTING
ON AN END TO THE WHITE POWER STRUCTURE. WITH THEM-
SELVES TAKING OVER RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SECURITY.
DR. OWEN CONCEIVED THE ROLE OF THE "THIRD FORCE" AS
SUPERVISING THE HANDOVER OF SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES BY
THE SMITH ADMINISTRATION TO THE ELECTED AFRICAN AD-
MINISTRATION. THIS COULD HAVE INVOLVED THE MERGING OF
THE EXISTING SECURITY FORCES WITH ELEMENTS OF THE
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PATRIOTIC FRONT UNDER A NEW, PERHAPS JOINT, COMMAND.
THIS WAS SEEN AS PARTICULARLY CRUCIAL TO THE OWEN
PLAN IN SO FAR AS THE FOREIGN OFFICE CONTINUED TO SEE
MR. NKOMO AS THE MAN MOST LIKELY TO BE ABLE TO MAKE A
DEAL WITH MR. SMITH AND TO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO CARRY
IT THROUGH. NOW THE FEAR MUST BE THAT MR. SMITH WILL
ATTEMPT AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT WITH THE REV. NDABANINGI

SITHOLE, WITH BISHOP MUZOREWA PERHAPS ALSO INVOLVED. IN THAT EVENT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT BRITAIN COULD DO TO AVOID A POSSIBLY LONG AND BITTER CIVIL WAR BETWEEN THEIR FORCES AND THE NKOMO-MUGABE FORCES. BEFORE THE REPUDIATION BY HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES OF THE POSSIBILITY OF BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN A THIRD FORCE, DR. OWEN HAD ENCOUNTERED A RELUCTANCE TO VOLUNTEER AMONG COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES, NOTABLY NIGERIA AND CANADA. THE ANGLO-AMERICAN INITIATIVE GREW OUT OF DR. OWEN'S BELIEF ON BECOMING FOREIGN SECRETARY EARLY THIS YEAR THAT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE HAD FAILED TO TAKE THE MEASURE OF THE PROBLEM OF TRANSITION. END TEXT

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